

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A smart audio guide system for use in conjunction with a content distribution network of a content distributor ~~an interactive content distribution system~~ that includes a distribution head-end ~~that makes~~ to distribute programming available for viewing on a video display device at a viewer subsystem, the viewer subsystem including an audio unit to provide audio for the video display unit, the smart audio guide system comprising:

a recommendation engine for providing a customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem based upon the programming ~~available from the interactive content distribution system~~ data maintained at the distribution head of the content distributor and a customized viewing profile ~~developed for~~ associated with a user of the viewer subsystem;

~~a processing unit~~ an interface device of the content distributor provided at the viewer subsystem, having an electronic program guide and configured and operative to implement the smart audio guide system functions;

a smart audio guide audio package maintained at the head end of the content distributor that includes at least a plurality of smart audio guide audio clips corresponding to the customized viewing-recommendations list; and

a smart guide actuator that is configured and operative in response to one or more predetermined conditions to activate the ~~processing unit~~ rendering of the smart audio guide audio clips and the customized viewing-recommendations list;

wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are generated ~~by~~ at a head-end of the ~~interactive content distribution system~~ content distributor and stored in a database at the head-end,

wherein said ~~processing unit~~ interface device is configured and operative to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in a predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit when activated to identify programs recommended for viewing at the viewer subsystem based upon the customized viewing-recommendations list, and

wherein, as the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips is being uttered, a corresponding visual presentation of the customized viewing-recommendations list is modified respectively to synchronize the uttering of each of the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips with matching program data in the visual presentation of the customized viewing-recommendations list.

2. (Previously Presented) The smart audio guide system of claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips corresponding to a recommended program of the customized viewing-recommendations list is generated by combining one or more audio clips identifying the recommended program and at least one standardized audio clip.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) The smart audio guide system of claim 1, wherein:
the corresponding visual presentation is a graphical recommendation menu and
the ~~processing unit~~ interface device is further configured and operative to implement
a focus frame that, upon each of the plurality of smart audio guide clips being uttered,
visually focuses a corresponding program grid of the graphical recommendation menu,
wherein the corresponding program grid is associated with a program identified by the smart
audio guide audio clip.

5. (Currently Amended) The smart audio guide system of claim 1, wherein:
the corresponding visual presentation is an electronic program guide and
the ~~processing unit~~ interface device is configured and operative to implement a focus
frame that visually focuses a corresponding program grid of the electronic program guide,
wherein the corresponding program grid is associated with a program identified by the smart
audio guide audio clip.

6. (Currently Amended) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 further
comprising a speech generating unit, and wherein the smart audio guide audio package
further comprises a plurality of smart audio guide text files;
and wherein the ~~processing unit~~ interface device is configured and operative to
implement the speech generating unit to convert the plurality of smart audio guide text files
into the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips.

7. (Currently Amended) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the viewer subsystem further includes a viewer control unit and wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a button on the viewer control unit, which when depressed, activates the ~~processing unit~~ interface device to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit.

8. (Currently Amended) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a set of instructions that activates the ~~processing unit~~ interface device to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit when the video display device at the viewer subsystem is initially activated.

9. (Currently Amended) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a set of instructions that activates the ~~processing unit~~ interface device to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit at the conclusion of a programming period.

10-11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the ~~processing unit~~ interface device is configured and operative to temporarily discontinue the audio associated with programming being displayed via the video display device at the viewer subsystem when the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips is being uttered in a predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit.

13 - 18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) An apparatus adapted for use in an interactive content distribution system, the apparatus comprising:

a recommendation subsystem configured to access a programs database at a content distributor over a network of the content distributor and to generate recommendations of available programs based upon viewer profile information and viewer content selection history maintained at the recommendation subsystem, wherein each recommended program is associated with at least one respective audio clip maintained at the content distributor for identifying content of the recommended program provided over the network of the content distributor; and

a viewer subsystem configured to ~~generate~~ render audiovisual signals associated with a program selection mechanism through a display and speakers, wherein the audiovisual signals include ~~including~~ audio clips associated with at least one recommended program.

20. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the audiovisual signals include image representative signals associated with an electronic program guide (EPG) provided in an interface device of the content distributor and wherein the audiovisual signals are configured such that, upon ~~generating~~ rendering of each of the audio clips associated with the at least one recommended program, a portion of the EPG corresponding to the at least one recommended program becomes visually focused.

21. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the audiovisual signals are adapted for presentation via a television.

22. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein programs and their respective audio clips are stored at a programs database at a head end of the content distributor ~~within the interactive content distribution system~~.

23. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 20, wherein normal presentation of the EPG is modified in response to the presence of recommended content within an EPG page.

24. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein an audio clip associated with recommended content is ~~presented~~ audibly rendered in response to the presence of recommended content displayed within an EPG page.

25. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein an audio clip associated with recommended content is ~~presented~~ audibly rendered in response to user manipulation of the displayed EPG to potentially recommended content.

26. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein in response to a user selection of a predefined graphical button each of a plurality of audio clips associated with recommended content is ~~presented~~ audibly rendered.

27. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19, further comprising a speech generating unit configured to provide audio data related to recommended content.

28. (Currently Amended) A method adapted for use in an interactive content distribution system, the method comprising:

accessing a programs database at a content distributor over a network of the content distributor using a recommendation subsystem and generating recommendations of available programs based upon viewer profile information and viewer content selection history maintained at the recommendation subsystem, wherein each recommended program is associated with at least one respective audio clip maintained at the content distributor for identifying content of the recommended program provided over the network of the content distributor; and

retrieving, from a head end of the interactive content distribution system, at least one audio clip identifying content of one of the recommended programs;

retrieving at least one standardized audio clip; and

~~generating~~ rendering audiovisual signals associated with a program selection mechanism through a display and speakers, the audiovisual signals including combined the at least one retrieved audio clip and one or more of the at least one standardized audio clip to identify the content of the recommended program.